Heterodoxy

Heterodoxy: challenging orthodoxies about heterosexuality

The intention of this article is to challenge certain orthodoxies regarding heterosexuality—orthodoxies which have tended, in critical literatures, to constitute heterosexuality as a static monolith, an unvarying, commanding mass, and queer theories, identities and practices as the only potential source for a less oppressive sexuality. By contrast, we wish to consider *heterodoxy* within heterosexuality by exploring possibilities for non-normative pleasure and change within the realm of the dominant.

What do we mean by 'heterodoxy' in this context? In general usage, heterodoxy is that which is at variance with, or that which differs or departs from the accepted, the standard, the status quo, the orthodox (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2012), without necessarily being its opposite. Heterodoxy refers to a leaning toward the *un*orthodox. In departing from the strictly orthodox, it may extend to the dissident, but falls short of heresy. In several recent publications (Beasley et al. 2012; Holmes et al. 2011), we begin to set out alternative approaches to heterosexuality. This paper provides an opportunity to develop and expand that approach. For us 'heterodoxy' is an apt term in that 'hetero' signifies both 'difference' and heterosexuality: it enables thinking about heterosexuality differently, if tentatively. We see our understanding of the heterodox reflected in a line from Leonard Cohen's song 'Anthem': '[t]here is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in'.

In order to develop an alternative approach to heterosexuality, we first of all discuss in more detail how and why we employ the term 'heterodoxy'. Following this, we outline three brief examples of departures from the normative. These departures are figured as divergence, transgression and subversion, all of which are more closely detailed in our earlier

work mentioned above. In this paper our examples are employed as succinct illustrations aimed at developing a clearer articulation of the term heterodoxy, as well as an initial methodological framework for future work. The examples presented offer a basis for consideration of some phenomenological terminologies that might be helpful for analysis of experiential movements between normativity and heterodoxy. The intention here is to consider not just the degrees to which practices might depart from the normative, but also how these departures are experienced. This conjunction offers a means to acknowledge heterosexuality's coercive aspects while attending to its more egalitarian, less orthodox forms.

Our discussion is, however, presently limited to English-language sources and western Anglophone contexts. Moreover, the focus is upon sexualities and to a lesser extent gender. Significant discussion of, for example, racialised/ethnic, disability, age and class variations remains beyond the scope of this paper. While elsewhere we have given some consideration to these, and aim to attend more closely to them in further work, here we foreground sexualities, gender and the theme of heterodoxy. This focus alone involves an substantial endeavour which can only be broadly outlined in a single paper.

Why heterodoxy?

We intend in this article to expand on earlier work in which we challenged the very common account of heterosexuality in critical gender/sexuality scholarship as nasty, boring and normative. Debates regarding this mainly pessimistic characterisation of heterosexuality are outlined in greater depth in Beasley et al. (2012). To summarise, we noted in that account that gender/sexuality scholarship is inclined to focus on heterosexuality's more negative and disturbing aspects while, at the same time, casting it as uninteresting. That is, heterosexuality

is usually critically conceived as homogeneous and synonymous with heteronormativity (see for example Carroll 2012; Reis and Grossmark 2009; Dworkin [1987] 2007; Bhattacharyya 2002; Heise 1997). Such presumptions play out the antagonisms of the 'sex wars', which raged in the 1980s but continue to be both implicitly and explicitly deployed in contemporary sexuality debates. The sex wars involve a dispute over whether sex is primarily dangerous or should be embraced as pleasurable (Duggan and Hunter 2006). Moroever, in this dispute pleasure is routinely constituted as residing in 'queer'—meaning non-heterosexual—sex (Richardson 2004). The oppositional stances of the sex wars thus leave heterosexuality in a dark, dull corner, its positive potential for joy and social change virtually unacknowledged and unexplored (but see Jackson and Scott 2007; 2001; Meah et al. 2011).

For us, considering the term *heterodoxy* means finding fissures in the supposed monolith of heterosexuality, and examining where the light gets in. In doing so, we do not examine important but well explored aspects of heterosexuality—such as prostitution, sexual violence, sexual trafficking, or cultural representations of heterosexuality –but rather consider less frequented corners. However, before attending to *how* to undertake potentially heterodoxical research, it is helpful to clarify *why* we might embark upon this challenge to the orthodox account of heterosexuality as unpleasant and offering no recourse to social change. In this setting, we suggest that it is is necessary to challenge the orthodoxy that heterosexuality is homogeneous and synonymous with heteronormativity.

A crucial feature of heteronormativity is that it propounds a hegemonic coherence against which all sexualities—including heterosexual practices themselves—are judged. This expressly requires a suppression of diversity even *within* heterosexuality (see also Berlant and Warner 1998: 548; Jackson 2006, 2005; Richardson 2004; Seidman 2005: 40) and a lack of appreciation of its fluid and dynamic aspects (Hockey et al. 2007). Nevertheless, with few exceptions, critical gender/sexuality scholarship continues to conflate heterosexuality and

heteronormativity as one and the same. Yet, if heterosexuality is *simply* equated with heteronormativity, the hegemonic coherence of heteronormativity is ironically upheld. Furthermore, since change is conceived as occurring only at the margins, the majority of the populace can be inferred to be mere robotic conformists condemned to stand outside the gate of historical change. In contrast, our concern is to 'undo' heterosexuality, to undo the illusory homogeneity and authority of the heteronorm, in similar fashion to Butler's 'undoing' or 'troubling' of gender (Butler 2004, 1990).

In the relatively rare discussion of non-normative sexual directions in relation to heterosexuality there has sometimes been an inclination to posit 'queer heterosexuality'. While we employ 'queer' to describe a particular approach or mode of theorising, and as usually linked to LGBTI sexualities (Ahmed 2006a; Richardson 2004), we deliberately do not use it as an easy synonym or umbrella term for the non-normative.[1] Why not? Why focus on the heterodox rather than the queer?

First of all, there are certain problems attached to the conjunction of queer and heterosexuality. The conjunction has provoked debates about the appropriation of queer for use in relation to heterosexuality (see for example Brook 1996; Schlichter 2004; Davidson 2005). 'Queer heterosexuality' looks suspiciously like a push for heterosexuality to 'have it all', to be both dominant and marginalised, such that heterosexuality invites itself along to the fashionably cool queer party without having had to pay the dues of marginalisation. Concerns about appropriation of the queer by heterosexual interests sometimes have practical manifestations. Recent (unsuccessful) requests to have a 'Queer Heterosexuality' float at the Sydney Mardi Gras, for example, produced controversy in a Facebook discussion over whether renouncing self-designation as heterosexual was necessary to queer identification, and relatedly whether the 'exclusion' of heterosexuals from the rubric of queer sexuality is problematic.[2]

Apart from practical political issues about *who* or *what* can be queer, there are further reasons to hesitate regarding the appellation of 'queer heterosexuality.' The radical potential of 'queer' to precisely signal the refusal of the homosexual/heterosexual binary, as well as highlighting the uncertainty and permeable fluidity of identity categories, may be said to sit awkwardly, or even incoherently, alongside any retention of a focus on heterosexuality (Beasley 1999: 82, 88; Butler [1997] 2013: 471-2). As A. Isaiah Green points out, queer thinking is about 'radical deconstruction' and 'radical subversion' (2007: 28-9). Queer thinking denotes an 'opposition to hegemonic norms', a protest against the 'normal' and 'static, norm-regulated identities' (Showden 2012: 8; see also Warner 2012).[3]

By contrast, we would suggest that the broader arena of the non-normative is not inevitably as challenging as that to which the term 'queer' can more confidently lay claim. Indeed, the non-normative, as will be outlined shortly, may often include more mundane everyday activities, which are not always self-consciously directed political acts, or inevitably in opposition to the normative (Hockey et al. 2007; see also endnote 1). To obscure the diversity of the non-normative by potentially sloppy over-use of the term 'queer' to encompass all sorts of practices not only risks diminishing its vital political significance, but also risks loss of recognition of a variety of more nuanced, fragile moments in analysis of social change. Perhaps the notion of a 'queer heterosexuality' might be best considered as a very specific, particularly challenging departure from heterosexual normativity. Our aim, however, is to consider a wider range of departures from the orthodox.

This range includes those departures that might be merely contingently divergent to those which move towards the dissident and even heretical—that is, towards sexualities which might be more clearly aligned with the queer. In short, we wish to make a case for the significance of the term *heterodoxy* as signalling an extensive variety of non-normative

heterosexual possibilities or innovations relevant to broader analysis of social change. Importantly, these innovations may continue to draw upon elements of the homosexual/heterosexual binary and do not presume the collapse of distinguishable sexual identity orientations. In other words, they may involve innovations within heterosexuality but nevertheless resist aspects of heteronormativity.

Figure: Heterosexualities—from normative to heretical

Insert Figure here

Instead of heterosexuality looking like a homogenous monolith, in this Figure we visualise a framework for considering a range of non-normative elements in the realm of the dominant. At its normative core, where heterosexuality is indeed equated with heteronormativity, we can see what might be termed 'cissexuality'—a space where sexed body, gender, sexual orientation, desire, sexual practice and inter-relationality align neatly with what is deemed to be the honoured or hegemonic form of heterosexuality (Harrison 2013: 12-13; Johnson 2013: 12).[4] Beyond this are comfortable and unthinking normative options which are perhaps less strictly or entirely aligned with the hegemonic, but which are nevertheless hegemonically satisfactory and 'do the job'.[5] An example of this 'good enough' normativity in a contemporary western setting might be a cohabiting heterosexual couple who remain unmarried. From this point onwards we begin to step into potentially non-normative terrain. In the figure above, this stretches from 'divergence' through to the entirely 'heretical'.

Let us now turn briefly to the three departures from heteronormativity mentioned earlier: divergence, transgression and subversion. We use these examples because all fall short of the more radical possibilities that might be associated with the term 'queer

heterosexuality'. We focus on them precisely to fill out the meaning of 'heterodoxy' and to consider the spaces for social change that, to our way of thinking, include much more than radical opposition. The discussion of these examples is necessarily schematic given limitations of space. For similar reasons, we focus on the conceptual/terminological, though there is reference to empirical scholarship and practical illustration. Divergence is closer to the norm than transgression, which in turn is closer than subversion. To diverge involves moving a little away from the norm while remaining within its purview, whereas to transgress involves straying from the straight and narrow path, but without that necessarily being the intention. By comparison, to subvert requires undermining the norm in a more reflexive fashion, although not always radically.

Divergence

Our first departure from the heterodox contests orthodoxies even at the centre of *institutionalised* heterosexuality—in this case, marriage. The orthodox view in critical gender/sexuality research is that heterosexual marriage is utterly and enduringly boring and normative: it is a bastion of heteronormative privilege. In this context, anti-gay US commentator Paul Cameron, for example, comments that '[m]arital sex tends toward the boring' (Cameron as cited by Dreyfuss 1999). Cameron's view is repeated, in general, by critics as well as defenders of heteronormativity. We do not wish to suggest that marriage is in fact a hotbed of exciting heterosexual innovation. However, we do question the way that heterosexual marriage and heteronormativity are so readily and routinely collapsed. We prefer to ask: does heterosexual marriage fall short of thoroughgoing heteronormativity? if marriage is not just a repository for homophobic and sexist imperatives, how might it be better conceptualised and understood?

Our heterodox approach to marriage seeks to challenge the orthodoxy that marriage and heteronormativity are virtually identical. We are concerned here to consider what we

have described as divergence from relentless conformity, to recognise that even in the seeming heartland of the heteronorm, the rhetorically effortless identity of marriage and heteronormativity is never quite realised. In a range of gender/feminist and sexualities scholarship, marriage has been positioned as a disciplining institution, as something whose primary function is to naturalise heterosexuality and gender roles. Adrienne Rich's (1980) landmark essay on compulsory heterosexuality marks the beginning of a clear trajectory of scholarship on sexuality which suggests that marriage is heterosexuality's premier institution (for example Emens 2009; Robson 2009; see also Jackson 1996: 24). There seems no space here for inconsistency.

In this context, while differences in conceptualisation and opinion amongst and between gay and lesbian thinkers on marriage are often acknowledged (see, for example, Rimmerman and Wilcox 2007; Gust et al. 2003; Stychin and Herman 2000; Wintemute and Andenæs 2001; Wolfson 1994), heterosexual perspectives remain likely to be treated as singularly hegemonic. Despite some academic accounts of intimacy and personal life that now acknowledge diversity in heterosexual relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Budgeon and Roseneil 2004), the notion of 'the heterosexual family'—singular, uniform—remains commonplace (see Ferguson 2007: 43 *et passim*). Yet heterosexual marriage is not one hegemonic structure. Instead we argue the position that (heterosexual) marriage is an institution whose meaning and effects for heteronormativity are dynamic and not entirely certain—a seemingly obvious, yet rarely acknowledged point. We note that acknowledgement of the possibility of inconsistency, the possibility of divergence, the existence of less than complete conformity, is an important means to open the conceptual and empirical gate to a more developed and dynamic account of sociality and social change.

Commentators like Robert H. Knight (American conservative writer, activist, and drafter of the US Defense of Marriage Act) argue that enabling same-sex marriage would

mean the complete evacuation of its personal and institutional meaning (Knight 1997). We assert that this wrongly positions marriage as, historically, always and inevitably heterosexual. It is not. Even as it has indisputably policed and protected heterosexuality, marriage has been peopled by sexual subjects who resist categorisation as straightforwardly or merely heterosexual. Such subjects include, most obviously, transgendered spouses (Ford 2000; Eskridge 1996) but also include non-normative heterosexualities. A number of matrimonial, divorce, and family law judgments attest to spouses behaving in non-normatively heterosexual ways. The example of a wife who relentlessly badgered her exhausted husband for sex until he sought a divorce on grounds of her cruelty (see *Willan v. Willan* 1958 and *Willan v. Willan* 1960, UK, in Brook 2007: 90-1), suggests the existence of something other than a narrowly 'straight', let alone a socially honoured mode of gendered heterosexuality. Furthermore, other judgements complicate the assumed concord between reproductive and hetero-sex that characterises marital heteronormativity. Consummation within a marriage, for instance, has been held *not* to have legally occurred, despite the husband and wife having had a child who was their biological offspring (*Clarke v. Clarke* 1943, UK, in Brook 2007: 75). Such examples are hardly routine, but appear as cracks in the institutional masonry of marriage. They represent moments of divergence from the normative (despite not operating as deliberate political protests) which should not be discounted or rendered invisible beneath the generality of marriage as institutional heteronormativity.

Clearly, marriage has exhibited homophobic and sexist tendencies: more than this, the regulation of conjugality has, at certain moments, been primarily dedicated to heteronormative purposes (Brook 2007). However, marriage does not *merely* naturalise, reward and protect heterosexuality. If the effect of institutionalised marriage is to preside over and mask a range of identities and practices, vesting them with falsely heteronormative uniformity, rejecting this characterisation becomes politically salient. We envisage here a

theorisation of conjugality in which heterosexuality is not always or inevitably complicit in constructing institutional privilege, even though it may be heteronormatively enveloped. This work may require attention to detail, but even in very narrow fissures, light may get in.

Transgression

Beyond the normative core, a heterodox approach is even more significant when considering transgressive possibilities for misbehaviour, lapses, and indiscretions as offences against the hetero-norm. These offences may edge towards lawbreaking, without *deliberately* undermining 'hetero-law'.

We suggest that it has become an orthodoxy to view queer sexualities as *the* site of transgressive sex. By contrast, heterosexuality continues to be critically assessed as typically unpleasant and inequitable (Beasley 2011, 2012). On this basis it is viewed as of limited theoretical interest and is implicitly equated with political stasis (see Rossi 2011:10). Thus, reassessing the link between transgression and heterosexuality becomes important because transgression can be politically significant. Elizabeth Wilson asserts, when discussing the example of a woman using a dildo on her male sexual partner, that no matter how transgressive or 'queer' this couple might feel themselves to be, to the world they are just 'kinky' heterosexuals. Many other examples of transgression exist,[6] and perceptions of what might be deemed 'kinky' vary. However, the crucial point here is that Wilson does not think that transgressive experimentation with sexual practices and roles makes any meaningful contribution to social change (Wilson 1997: 169).

Against Wilson, we argue that transgression can invoke possibilities for politics. 'Kinky' or otherwise innovative heterosexual sex is *not* always or necessarily politically meaningless. To rehearse the catchphrase of second-wave feminism, the personal remains

political, and the effects of a range of sexual practices are not necessarily confined to the private. Hence we reconsider innovative sexual (that is, 'private') conduct in terms of the political. In this context, the term transgression is especially useful for our investigation of heterodoxy. Transgression in the realm of heterosexuality is not necessarily about decisive ruptures, breaks, or fissures. While it may include a more overt invocation to law-breaking that connects private practices to public politics, it also retains a broader association with 'wrongdoing', and 'wandering'.[7] It becomes possible to consider private sexual conduct, such as innovative hetero-sex, as a potential moment of transgression.

We see transgression as a term that is more about straying from, rather than undermining normative regimes. Heterodox ways of 'doing heterosexuality' (Rossi 2011:20) require theorisation which moves beyond the simple equation of heterosexuality with heteronormativity. However, if heterosexuality is not a heteronormative 'closed book', what might transgression in the realm of the dominant look like?

We have several thoughts on this, but will mention just one for now. In conceptualising a *transgressive* heterosexuality, it is necessary to attend to the privileging of phallic hetero-masculine sex and, for us, this indicates a necessary confrontation with the abjection of the penetrated. Pro-sex queer theorists have raised doubts about the seemingly self-evident hierarchical relation between the penetrator and penetrated (Thomson 2011: 243, 250). By contrast with Wilson's rather disparaging assessment of innovations in penetrative hetero-sex, this seems to us a useful direction when thinking about the meaning of transgression.

Queer theorising unravels stereotypical gendered/sexual alignments such that, for example, the penetrated cannot be presumed to occupy a particular gender or a particular sexual orientation, and is not necessarily located as socially subordinate or sexually abject. For example, Bobby Noble and Ann Cvetkovich draw attention to an active sexual receptivity

that defies traditional sexual taxonomies in their discussions of gender queer, butch-femme and gay male 'bottom' narratives (Noble 2007:161-164; Cvetkovich 1995:136-137). In considering transgressive possibilities we must be equally alert to the complex ways in which people occupy and perform heterosexual practices.

Subversion

Our outline of heterodox heterosexuality now moves beyond the transgressive to explore *subversive* possibilities. Subversion involves a more purposeful, conscious challenge to the orthodox. Where transgression can be an accidental straying from the norm, subversion is more deliberate, even if not undertaken as a deliberately 'political' stand. And, while transgression has a more temporary aspect, subversion entails taking a slightly more lasting path. As noted with regard to transgression, subversive challenges to heterosexuality are not limited to merely exotic forms of sexual relating. Diverse forms of heterosexuality can subversively exceed the heteronorm: think of deliberate childlessness for example. However, given limitations of space, here, we will just consider one form, which in this case upsets normative assumptions about heterosexuality as always or inevitably assuming *cohabiting* couple relationships. Although non-cohabitation of partners is not new, nor necessarily revolutionary, contemporary decisions to not co-reside with a partner can signify and produce a reflexive questioning of the centrality of heterosexual relationships in people's lives (Roseneil 2005). Non-cohabitation also returns us to an issue raised in relation to transgression in suggesting that some heterosexual couples might 'undo' heteronormative accounts of hetero-sex as necessarily equivalent to penetrative penis-vagina sex.

Some non-cohabiting couples subvert hegemonic heterosexual 'sexual scripts' (Gagnon and Simon [1973] 2005), which designate physical closeness to be a key sign of the

commitment, familiarity, privileged knowledge, and active caring that supposedly comprise intimacy (Giddens 1992: 96-8; Jamieson 1998: 8; Lasch 1995: xiii-xvii; 138-140; Smart 2007). Heterodox forms of non-cohabiting intimacy may include couples living apart together ('LAT'—that is, couples who live separately), some of whom live nearby and others in 'distance relationships' (see Duncan and Phillips 2010; Holmes 2006). Such relationships reveal that proximity does not guarantee intimacy, and intimacy can be maintained without proximity (Baldassar et al 2007; Holmes 2010, 2004). All relationships deal with some degree of physical and emotional distance occasionally (Simmel [1908] 1971), but some heterosexual couples more obviously subvert hegemonic norms of cohabitation and hence understandings of heterosexual coupledom, commitment and intimacy.

Non-cohabitation *can* involve deliberate efforts to find more independent or mutual ways of relating (Holmes 2004). Such heterodox forms of intimacy may well be responses to increased geographical mobility and other practices to which many people are compelled by processes of globalisation (Elliott and Urry 2010; Bauman 2003). Non-cohabitation not only potentially involves challenges to the normative heterosexual ideal of legitimate commitment but clearly suggests some questions about what constitutes *sexual* relationality. Living together is not always sexually exciting or even satisfactory, and living apart does not necessarily reduce sexual pleasure or activity (Gerstel and Gross 1984: 62-6).

Not cohabiting may sometimes offer more sexual excitement than cohabiting. Not cohabiting can avoid over-familiarity. Being apart often may force couples to communicate better, avoid conflict and enhance romance (Holmes 2004; Gerstel and Gross 1984: 74-7). Doing heterosexual relationships differently can bring a feeling of exploration and excitement, or quieter but nonetheless subversive enjoyments, including those mobilised in communications, imaginings and memories. Relatedly, some forms of non-cohabiting intimate heterosexual relationships can also provide heterodox experiences of 'the sexual',

which subvert the importance usually given to penetrative penis-vagina sex. Doing things differently, even if not challenging the normative in markedly radical or 'queer' terms, can nevertheless provide opportunities for pleasure and possibilities for change.

Between normativity and innovation: considering terminologies/methods for the exploration of heterosexual heterodoxy

The figure (above) used to visualise the non-monolithic diversity of heterosexualities suggests a *terrain* of socially situated and embodied practices ripe for empirical research. In keeping with understandings of 'queer' as a verb rather than noun, as a range of actions rather than modes of identity or being (Sullivan 2003, 50, Showden 2012, 9), our aim is to enable research on heterosexuality to invoke a sense of dynamism and inter-relational uncertainty, such that heterodoxy is conceived as processual, as non-normative *practices*, rather than as a question of 'types' of identities or even coherent or ongoing behaviours. Heterodoxy may be temporary, contingent, and fleeting, as well as sometimes deliberate, decisive and ongoing. Such different temporalities may exist simultaneously with regard to different practices. In this setting, it becomes crucial to move beyond a schematic plane of heterosexual possibilities (as illustrated in the figure), towards consideration of how we might recognise, conceptualise and research experiential *movements* between normativity and innovation.

To prepare the ground for such empirically based research we draw upon and reconfigure certain phenomenological terminologies employed within queer postcolonial thinking that might be useful in fleshing out the schematic paradigm so far outlined. These terminologies are chosen as a starting point because they focus on how queer subjects *move* between normativity and queer possibilities. While they focus on queer trajectories, these terminologies can nevertheless provide a means to grasp how heterosexual subjects might

interact with and sometimes move between the borders of normativity and degrees of heterodoxy.

Tulia Thompson (forthcoming) both draws upon and reworks terminologies employed by Sara Ahmed in her book, *Queer Phenomenology* (2006a).[8] Thompson's discussion provides a basis for reconsidering these in the setting of heterosexual heterodoxy. Thompson notes that Ahmed's usage of phenomenological terms tends to construct the experiential through 'an *individualised* human body as the vehicle for *perception*' (Thompson forthcoming: 47, emphasis added). This is despite Ahmed's linkage of sexual/bodily 'orient-ation' with the politics of colonialism. For Thompson, the analysis of queer subjects' movements between normativity and innovation requires a less Eurocentric, less individualised account—one which is not just perceptual, but more strongly integrates inter-subjective, communal, systemic and institutional imperatives (Thompson: 47, 55, 35). In this context, Ahmed's use of terms like 'orientation', 'lines' and 'directions' as ways to describe the accrued constraining force of social requirements (Ahmed 2006a: 11, 14-16, 21) may appear as somewhat too linear and individually oriented. We suggest, in the context of developing concepts to aid in researching heterodoxy, that it may be helpful to talk about 'scenarios' which emphasize active inter-relational contextual location rather than a singular path or line of sight.

There may be similar issues with Ahmed's employment of the terms, 'straightening', 'stopping' and 'disorientation' (Ahmed 2006a: 66-67, 92, 139, 140). 'Straightening' refers to experiences of being brought back into line with normativity, 'stopping' to coming up against social obstacles which impede shifts away from normativity, and 'disorientation' to moments in which there is an awareness of other possibilities than the normative. These terms may also tend towards the assumption of an individualised perceptual subject. However, we consider that they do perhaps enable some space for thinking about and investigating heterodoxy

empirically. All the same, such terms tend to have a more dramatic and perhaps more oppositional stance—perhaps arising from their particular relevance to and focus on queer subjects. For this reason we prefer the term 'swivelling' developed by Thompson (forthcoming: 134) to denote the less radical inclination of many straight and queer people to turn back and forth between normative and heterodox possibilities in relation to sexuality, indicating an active and unceasing modulation rather than the linearity of a queer path which is interrupted—which tends to be the way Ahmed's terms describe experiential movements.

Why make a point of such terms? For us, they suggest *qualitative markers* for empirical investigation. It is possible to ask subjects to consider whether they might have felt they were straightened up or stopped in relation to their experience of heterosexuality, whether they felt they were required to swivel back and forth between the accepted and the less orthodox, or whether they ever felt disoriented and had a sense of alternatives with which they were not familiar. Such qualitative markers can provide a means for articulating experiential movements within and across a taxonomy of heterosexual scenarios.

Conclusion

Bhattacharyya's summative point regarding the social location of heterosexuality—that is, straights 'are just straight' (2002: 22)—cannot be all that sexuality scholarship says about the subject. In this context, it is asserted that non-normative possibilities should not be understood as available only at the social margins. Instead, such possibilities may be intrinsic within even dominant practices like heterosexuality. Heterodox ways of 'doing heterosexuality and heterogenders' (Rossi 2011:20) require conceptual theorisation and empirical scrutiny in ways which move beyond the equation of heterosexuality with

heteronormativity. With this aim in mind, how then might heterodoxy be understood and investigated?

Developing the notion of heterodoxy provides a means to critically examine a number of orthodoxies about heterosexuality, enabling exploration of possibilities for change even where these are not self-consciously or deliberately political. In order to undertake this exploration we firstly outlined why heterodoxy might be a useful way of discussing the non-normative, and then used three gradients of dissent to illustrate this—divergence, transgression and subversion. Finally, we turned from these illustrations to a brief account of potentially useful terms drawn from queer postcolonial thought to explore how subjects might experience location within and movement across these gradients.

The conjunction of examining diverse practices in heterosexuality, along with a focus on experiential turning points, is primarily aimed towards the development and use of the term 'heterodoxy', but is also intended to signal an initial methodological framework for future theoretical and empirically based work. By this means, we hope to better understand and contest heterosexuality's coercive aspects while also gaining a better understanding of how more egalitarian forms of heterosexuality might be possible.

References

Ahmed, S. (2006a) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2006b) Orientations. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12(4): 543-574.

Anapol, D. (1997) *Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits*. San Rafael: IntiNet Resource Center.

Baldassar, L., Baldock, C., and Wilding, R. (2007) Families Caring across Borders: *Migration, Ageing and Transnational Caregiving*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bauman, Z. (2003) *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds.* Cambridge: Polity.

Beasley, C. (2005) *Gender & Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: Sage.

Beasley, C., Brook, H. and Holmes, M. (2012) *Heterosexuality in Theory and Practice*. NY & London: Routledge.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualisation*. London: Routledge.

Bell, D. (2006) Bodies, Technologies, Spaces: On 'Dogging'. *Sexualities* 9 (4): 387-407.

Berlant, L. and Warner, M. (1998) Sex in Public. *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Winter): 548.

Bhattacharyya, G. (2002) *Sexuality and Society: An Introduction*. NY: Routledge.

Brook, H. (1996) Queer football: feminism, sexuality, corporeality. *Critical InQueeries* 1(2): 25-45.

Brook, H. (2007) *Conjugal Rites: Marriage and Marriage-like Relationships before the Law.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Budgeon, S. and Roseneil, S. (2004) Editors' introduction: beyond the conventional family. *Current Sociology* 52(2): 127-34.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. 2004 *Undoing Gender.* London: Routledge.

Butler, J. [1997] (2013) Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In C. R. McCann and S. Kim (eds), *Feminist*

Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, 3rd edition. London & NY: Routledge, 462-473.

Carroll, R. (2012) Introduction: feminism, queer theory and heterosexuality. In *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1-21.

Cvetkovich, A. (1995) Recasting receptivity: femme sexualities. In K. Jay (ed.) *Lesbian Erotics*. New York: New York University Press, 125–46.

Duggan, L. and Hunter, N.D. (2006) *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Dreyfuss, R. **(**1999) The Holy War on Gays. *Rolling Stone Magazine* 18 March.

Duncan, S. and Philips, M. (2010) People who live apart together (LATs): How different are they? *Sociological Review* 58(1): 112–134.

Easton, D. and Liszt, C. (1997) *The Ethical Slut: A guide to infinite sexual possibilities*. San Francisco: Greenery Press.

Elliott, A. and Urry, J. (2010) *Mobile Lives.* London: Routledge.

Emens, E.F. (2009) Compulsory monogamy and polyamorous existence. In M.A. Fineman, J.E. Jackson and A.P. Romero (eds) *Feminist and Queer Legal Theory: Intimate Encounters, Uncomfortable Conversations*, Farnham: Ashgate, 259–85.

Eskridge, W. **(**1996) *The Case for Same-Sex Marriage: From Sexual Liberty to Civilized Commitment.* New York: Free Press.

Ferguson, A. (2007) Gay marriage: an American and feminist dilemma. *Hypatia* (special issue: Writing against Heterosexism) 22(1): 39–57.

Ford, R. (2000) “They were wed, and merrily rang the bells”: gender crossing and same-sex

marriage in Australia, 1900-1940. In D.L. Phillips and G. Willett (eds) *Australia's Homosexual Histories.* Sydney: Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research.

Gagnon, J and Simon, W. ([1973] 2005) *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. New Brunswick and London: Aldine Transaction.

Gerstel, N.R. and H. Gross, H. (1984) *Commuter Marriage: A Study of Work and Family.* London: Guildford Press.

Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies.* Palo Alto, CA.: Stanford University Press.

Green, A. I. (2007) Queer Theory and Sociology: Locating the Subject and the Self in Sexuality Studies. *Sociological Theory* 25 (March): 26-45.

Gust, A.Y, Lovaas, K.E. and Elia, J.P**.** (2003) A critical appraisal of assimilationist and radical ideologies underlying same-sex marriage in LGBT communities in the United Sates. *Journal of Homosexuality* 45(1): 45-64.

Harrison, K. (2013) *Sexual Deceit: The Ethics of Passing*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Heise, L. (1997) 'Violence, sexuality and women's lives', in R. Lancaster and M. Di Leonardo (eds), *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*, New York & London: Routledge, 411-33.

Hockey, J. Meah, A. and Robinson, V. (2007) *Mundane Heterosexualities: From Theory to Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holmes, M. (2010) Intimacy, distance relationships, and emotional care. *Recherches Sociologiques et Anthropologiques* 41(1): 105-23.

Holmes, M. (2006) Love Lives at a Distance: Distance Relationships Over the Lifecourse. *Sociological Research Online,* 11(3), [http://www.socresonline.org.uk/11/3/holmes.html—accessed June 2013].

Holmes, M. (2004) The precariousness of choice in the new sentimental order: A comment on Bawin Legros. *Current Sociology* 52(2): 251-7.

Jackson, S. (2006) Gender, Sexuality and Heterosexuality: The Complexity (and Limits) of Heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory* 7(1): 105-121.

Jackson, S. **(**1996) Heterosexuality as a Problem for Feminist Theory. In L. Adkins and V. Merchant (eds) *Sexualizing the Social: Power and the Organisation of Sexuality*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 15–34.

Jackson, S. and Scott, S. (2007) Faking like a woman? Towards an interpretive theorization of sexual pleasure. *Body and Society* 13(2): 95-116.

Jackson, S. and Scott, S. (2001) Embodying orgasm: Gendered power relations and sexual pleasure. *Women & Therapy* 24(1/2): 99-110.

Jamieson, L. (1998) *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies.* Cambridge: Polity.

Johnson, J. R. (2013) Cisgender Privilege, Intersectionality, and the Criminalization of CeCe McDonald: Why Intercultural Communication Needs Transgender Studies. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 6(2): 135-144.

Knight, R.H. (1997) How domestic partnerships and "gay marriage" threaten the family. In R.M. Baird and S.E. Rosenbaum (eds) *Same-Sex Marriage: The Moral and Legal Debate.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 108–21.

Lasch, C. (1995) *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged.* New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co.

Mazur, R. [1973] (2000) *The New Intimacy: Open-Ended Marriage and Alternative Lifestyles*. Lincoln, NE: Excel Press.

Meah, A., Hockey, J. & Robinson, B. (2011) 'I'm a sex kitten, aren't I …': Relocating agency and pleasure in older women's narratives about sex. *Australian Feminist Studies* 26(67): 57-71.

Noble, B. (2007) Queer as Box: Boi Spectators and Boy Culture on Showtime's *Queer as Folk*. In M.L. Johnson (ed.) *Third Wave Feminism and Television: Jane Puts It in a Box.* London: I.B. Tauris, 147–65.

Oxford English Dictionary (2013). Definition of cisgender. OED online, Oxford University Press: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/cisgender, accessed 6 June 2013.

Reis, B. and Grossmark, R. (2009) *Heterosexual Masculinities: Perspectives from Contemporary Psychoanalytic Gender Theory*. NY and Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

Rich, A. (1980) Compulsory heterosexuality and the lesbian continuum. *Signs* 5(4): 631-660.

Richardson, D. (2004) *Rethinking Sexuality*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA. & New Delhi: Sage.

Rimmerman, C.A. and Wilcox, C. (eds). (2007) *The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Robson, R. (2009) Compulsory matrimony. In M.A. Fineman, J.E. Jackson and A.P. Romero (eds) *Feminist and Queer Legal Theory: Intimate Encounters, Uncomfortable Conversations*, Farnham: Ashgate, 313–28.

Roseneil, S. (2005) 'Living and loving beyond the boundaries of the heteronorm: personal relationships in the 21st century', in L. Mckie, S. Cunningham-Burley and J. McKendrick (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships.* Bristol: Policy Press.

Rossi, L-M. (2011) 'Happy' and 'unhappy' performatives: Images and norms of heterosexuality. *Australian Feminist Studies* 26(67): 9–23.

Segal, L. (1994) *Straight Sex: The Politics of pleasure*. Columbia University: Virago Press.

Seidman, S**.** (2005) From polluted homosexual to the normal gay: Changing patterns of sexual regulation in America. In C. Ingraham (ed) *Thinking Straight: New Work in Critical Heterosexuality Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. (2002) Volume 2, 5th edition. NY: Oxford UP.

Showden, C. R. (2012) Theorising maybe: A feminist/queer theory convergence. *Feminist Theory* 13(1): 3-25.

Simmel, G. ([1908] 1971) The stranger. In D.N. Levine (ed.) *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Smart, C. (2007) *Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Stychin, C. and Herman, D. (eds) (2000) *Law and Sexuality: The Global Arena.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sullivan, N. (2003) *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. NY: NY University Press.

Thompson, T. (forthcoming) *Queer Lives in Fiji*. University of Auckland: unpublished thesis submitted for PhD in Sociology.

Thomson, M. (2011) A tale of two bodies: The male body in feminist legal theory. In M. Fineman (ed.) *Transcending the Boundaries of Law: Generations of Feminism and Legal Theory*. Abingdon, Oxon & NY: Routledge, 143-156.

Urban Dictionary, [http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cissexual –accessed June 2013].

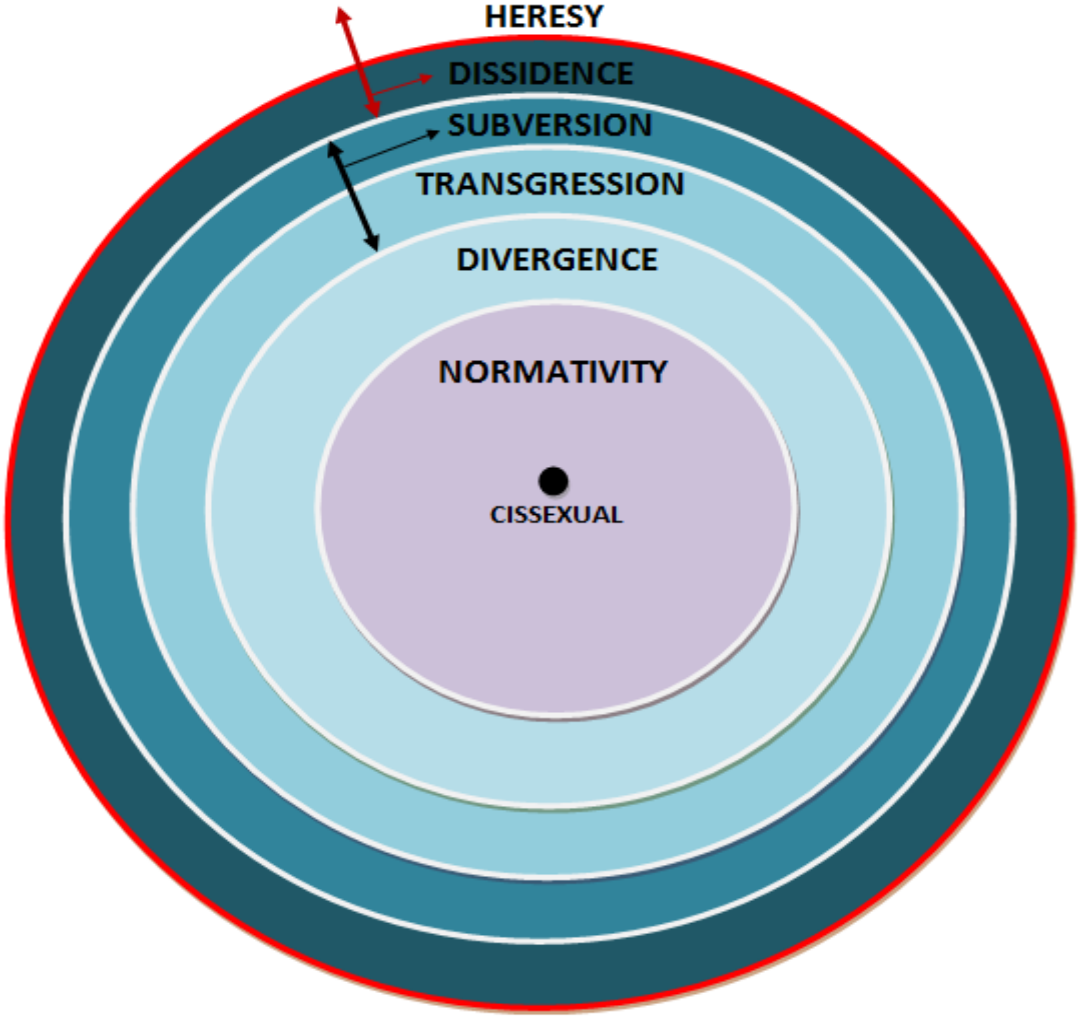
Warner, M. (2012) Queer and Then? *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 58(19) January 1, [http://chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/ --accessed June 2013].

Wilson, E. (1997) Is transgression transgressive? In S. Kemp and J. Squires (eds) *Feminisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 368–69.

Wintemute, R. and Andenæs, M. (eds) (2001) *Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnerships: A Study of National, European and International Law.* Oxford: Hart.

Wolfson, E. **(**1994) Crossing the threshold: Equal marriage rights for lesbians and gay men, and the intracommunity critique. *New York University Review of Law and Social Change* 21: 567–615.

Figure: Heterosexualities—from normative to heretical



[1] We employ the term non-normative to evoke a wide range of 'non-standard' possibilities with regard to heterosexuality, thus enabling attention to everything from the mundane or everyday (see also Hockey et al 2007) to that which might be deemed sensational, surprising, rare or even bizarre. The term is intended to include the counter-normative—that is, more purposeful and oppositional possibilities—but encompass possibilities which are much less consciously chosen.

[2] This example arises from personal communication with Peter Banki, 27 February 2013.

[3]This linkage of queer with radical and oppositional is however not the only meaning it is sometimes given. For example, Ahmed suggests two rather less challenging characterisations, such as bent or offline, or simply a synonym for LGBTI—referring specifically to lesbian (Ahmed 2006b: 565; see also Beasley 2005). However, even in these less challenging characterizations do suggest a stronger degree of counter-normativity than the than the full range of non-normative possibilities we are highlighting.

[4] This terminology is still emerging and there are several meanings attached to it. However, it is typically located as the antonym of 'transsexual' and in our usage combines 'cisgender' (alignment of sex designated at birth with gender identification) and 'straight'—that is, we use it as a shorthand for clear-cut alignment with heteronormative heterosexuality. See also Urban Dictionary, Definition of cissexual (2013) and *Oxford English Dictionary*, Definition of cisgender (2013).

[5] See Rossi (2011) on 'happy' heterosexual performatives.

[6] Other examples might include some possibly more confronting heterosexual activities—such as sex in public places like car-parks and public gardens, group sex, women purchasing paid sex, non-monogamy/swinging/'polyamory', gender ambiguous sexual fantasies (see for instance Hazell 2009; Bell 2006; Mazur [1973] 2000; Anapol 1997; Easton and Liszt 1997; Segal 1994).

[7] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Volume 2, 5th edition (2002: 3327, 3684).

[8] See also Ahmed (2006b: 543-574).